



The President's Daily Brief

28 May 1970

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The action in Cambodia has boosted the morale of South Vietnamese troops. (Page 1)

There has been no major military activity in Laos, but Vang Pao is preparing to retake Ban Na. (Page 2)

Communist activity is increasing in Cambodia, particularly in the southern region. (Page 3)

Ceylon's leftists win the parliamentary election. (Page 4)

The Lebanese Government is trying to curb the fedayeen. (Page 5)

West Germany's negotiations with the USSR seem to be satisfactory from Bonn's point of view. (Page 6)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

Several high-level South Vietnamese Army officers have commented recently that the morale of their troops has improved as a result of their operations into Cambodia, and that the units involved in Cambodia have shown greater aggressiveness than ever before against the Communists. For example, [redacted] II Corps commander General Lan recently told [redacted] [redacted] these operations have given South Vietnam's 47th Regiment a needed shot in the arm.

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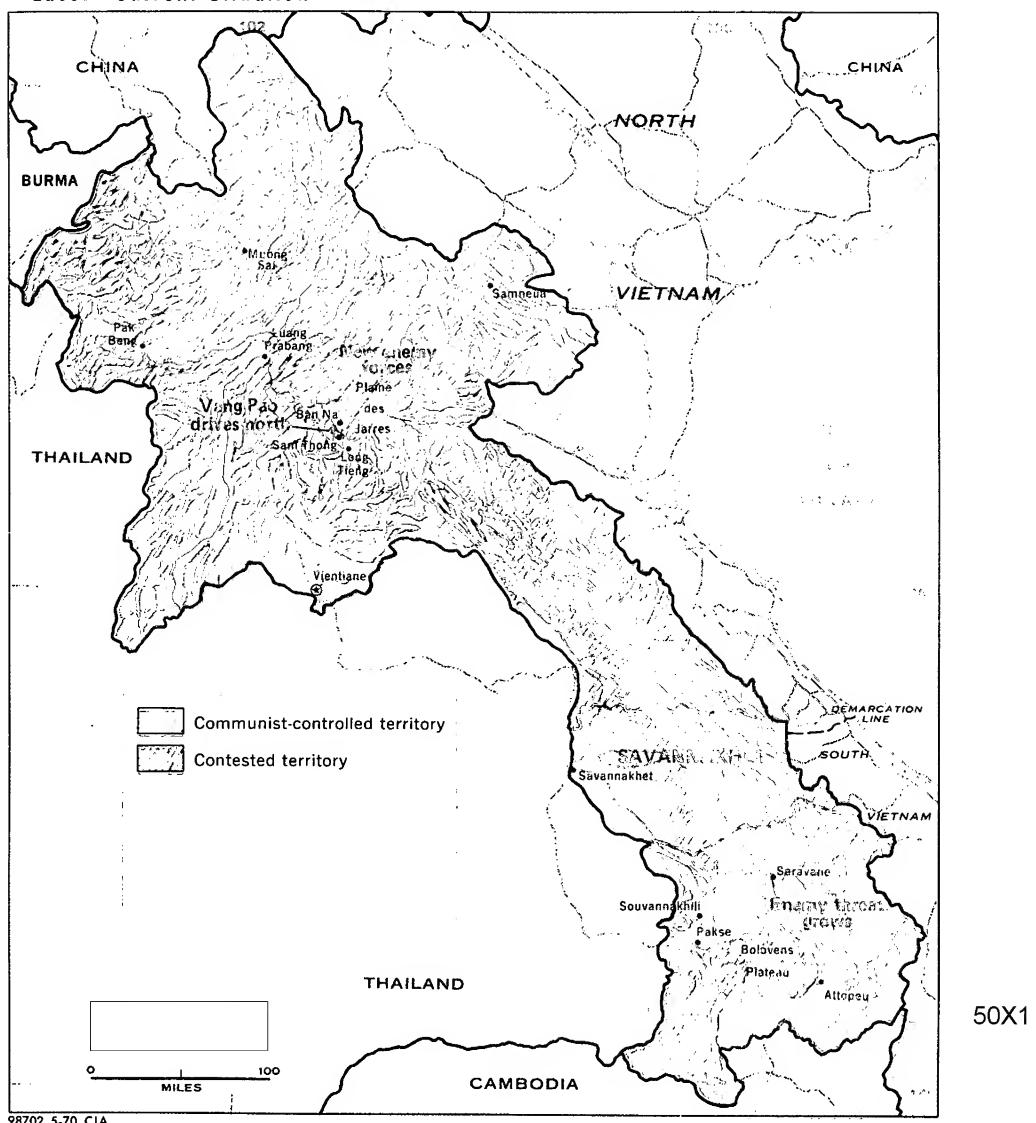
More than 30,000 South Vietnamese have been assembled, transported, and resupplied in simultaneous and coordinated action. They have derived some pride from their ability to organize such large operations, even with US help. Previously, some of the units involved returned to their base camps regularly each night when conducting their usual operations in South Vietnam. Whether they can maintain their new martial spirit after they return to more routine missions at home is open to question.

Meanwhile, according to General Lan, security conditions have been deteriorating in most II Corps provinces. He hopes operations in Cambodia, especially the disruption of Communist logistics, will help him improve pacification in his own corps area. He is particularly disappointed in the performance of the Regional and Popular Forces, which have primary responsibility for improving territorial security and containing enemy local and guerrilla forces. The Communists have made inroads especially in Kontum and Pleiku provinces, Lan says, since Vietnamization and the withdrawal of elements of the US 4th Division, which had provided important support to pacification there.

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[redacted] has been attributed largely to the enemy's new emphasis on rebuilding his local control structures and on reasserting influence over the rural population.

Laos: Current Situation



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LAOS

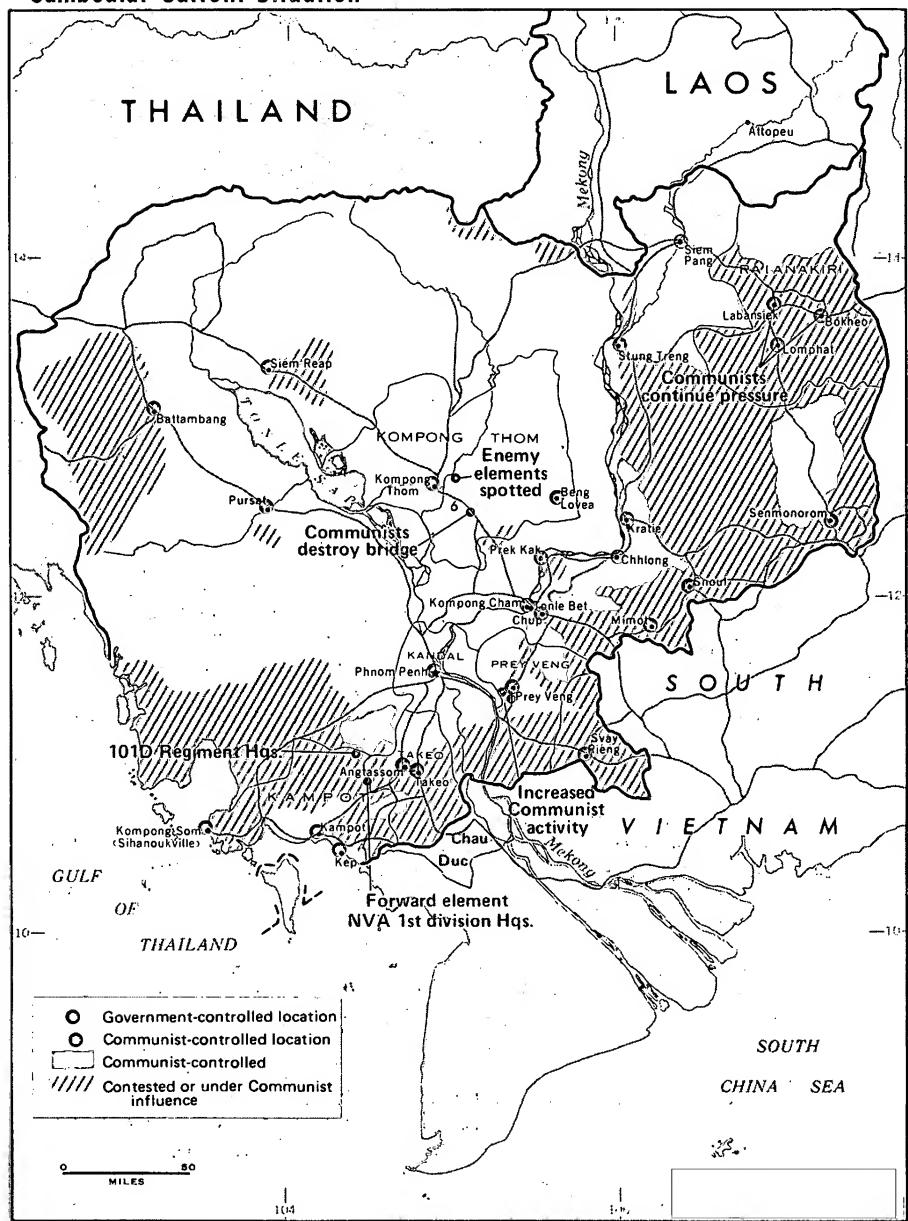
Vang Pao has returned to the offensive with a three-battalion drive to retake the guerrilla base of Ban Na. By yesterday evening, irregular units had moved to high ground within about four miles of their objective. Initial enemy resistance to the drive was light, but apparently stiffened as the Meo forces moved northward.

An unidentified unit of the North Vietnamese 312th Division, possibly a regiment, has moved about 35 miles southwest from the Plaine des Jarres during the last three days to within three miles of Sam Thong. One battalion of the 316th Division also has moved to within striking distance of Sam Thong. The concentration of forces in the area and the pace and nature of their activities suggest that a major attack is possible in the near future.

In southern Laos, two headquarters elements of the North Vietnamese 565th group left Savannakhet Province some time after 13 May, and have now joined the recently arrived 4th battalion of the 565th group on the western outskirts of Saravane. Intercepts have referred to an "N Day" on 31 May, possibly indicating an attack on the provincial capital. On 26 May the southern region military commander, General Phasouk, ordered the evacuation of all civilians still in Saravane. Phasouk has also placed the Pakse and Souvannakhili garrisons on full alert as a result of unconfirmed reports of impending harassment.

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Cambodia: Current Situation



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CAMBODIA

Elements of a Communist main force unit have moved deep into southern Cambodia, according to communications intercepted in the past ten days. These troops may be attempting to evade ARVN operations, but it is also possible that their movement may be associated with Communist plans to organize a special combat unit for anti-Cambodian operations in the southern provinces.

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The Communists are still active in areas east of Kompong Thom city, although no major new attacks have been reported. Small enemy elements have been spotted on the outskirts of the city. Perhaps they were responding to a recent Communist message that ordered the city be reconnoitered before an attack against it is launched.

In the south, increasing Communist military activity is increasing along the border between Prey Veng and Kandal provinces. One government unit stated there were no more Cambodians located in these areas, and requested an air strike on 26 May against a Communist battalion south of Prey Veng.

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CEYLON

In yesterday's parliamentary elections, the left-wing coalition led by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, prime minister from 1960-65, unexpectedly crushed the moderately pro-Western United National Party of Prime Minister Senanayake. Mrs. Bandaranaike's partners in the coalition, the Trotskyite Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the pro-Moscow wing of the Communist Party of Ceylon, will participate in the new government. Causes of the UNP defeat are not yet clear but widespread unemployment, a rapidly rising cost of living, Senanayake's action in cutting the subsidized rice ration, and coalition charges that the UNP was becoming subservient to the West presumably were factors.

An election manifesto described the new government's projected policies. They include establishing "people's committees" to supervise the workings of the bureaucracy, nationalizing remaining private banks, and increasing state control over the import-export trade.

The manifesto indicated there will be an anti-Western bias in Ceylon's future "non-aligned" foreign policy. It promised recognition of East Germany, North Korea, North Vietnam, and the Provisional Republic of South Vietnam, as well as suspension of relations with Israel.

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LEBANON

Following three days of Israeli patrols into southern Lebanon, Interior Minister Jumblatt announced yesterday that the cabinet had decided to attempt to prevent the fedayeen from firing into Israel from Lebanon. Press sources also report that beginning on 15 June, the army will be empowered to fire on fedayeen carrying weapons in any town or village. President Hili has asked Arab leaders to convince the fedayeen that their activities against Israel are doing more harm to the Lebanese and Arab cause than they are to Israel.

In a sensitive conversation, President Hili's confidant, Michel Khoury, told Ambassador Porter that Jumblatt will seek fedayeen agreement to cease all operations outside the Mount Hermon area. For its part, Fatah may have already decided unilaterally to restrict its activities to areas adjacent to Mount Hermon. According to Khoury, Fatah has also concluded that cross-border firing has been a tactical and strategic error. Although Fatah is the largest fedayeen organization in Lebanon, its actions would not necessarily be followed by the other groups.

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WEST GERMANY - USSR

In a briefing for the three Western Allied foreign ministers on the results of the talks between Foreign Minister Gromyko and Egon Bahr, Foreign Minister Scheel said in Rome on 25 May that the two sides have agreed "to regard...the borders of all states in Europe as inviolable" as they exist on the day an agreement is signed. This includes the Oder-Neisse line and the East German - West German border. At the same time, both parties would stipulate that the agreement does not affect "treaties and agreements concluded earlier by both sides."

Under this draft formulation, the West Germans may maintain that they have held to their basic position by avoiding the use of the word "recognition" demanded by the Soviets, by preserving postwar treaty obligations, and by protecting Allied rights pending a final settlement.

In addition, Scheel said Bonn has hitched its acceptance of European borders to Soviet agreement to accept a letter describing the West German right to pursue reunification by peaceful means. With regard to Bonn's hopes for improving the status of West Berlin, Scheel said the Soviets had been told that a Soviet - West German agreement as well as any agreements that Bonn may negotiate with East Germany and with Poland would form a single package with the Four-Power talks on Berlin. He added that West Germany would not ratify the agreements until the parties concerned reached a Berlin settlement satisfactory to both Bonn and the Allies.

The West German cabinet is expected to approve formal negotiations, and Scheel will be appointed to go to Moscow perhaps as early as June, according to informed observers.

Moscow probably views the text as bringing the USSR quite close to its central objective in the talks--gaining unequivocal and binding West German recognition of European borders and the postwar status quo. Since the draft text is still somewhat ambiguous in this respect, the Soviets will probably

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haggle further in an effort to close some loopholes in the language. They may push for an explicit reference to the East German state and will probably insist on a clarification of the relationship between this agreement and other treaties and agreements in a final draft.

The essence of Scheel's message is that Bonn has not given away anything vital in the preliminary round and is studiously looking out for Western Allied rights. Opposition Christian Democratic spokesmen disagree strenuously, of course. A popular test of the government line will take place on 14 June in state elections in North Rhine - Westphalia, the Saar, and Lower Saxony.

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NOTES

USSR-Egypt: [redacted]

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UN-Seabeds: The President's proposal last week that all nations renounce claims to natural resources on the ocean floor beyond a depth of 200 meters has generated great interest and generally favorable comment. Chile and Peru have already stated their opposition, however, and other Latin American nations with narrow geologic continental margins may soon join them. The majority of the delegates at the UN believe the US initiative has given a boost to hopes that the UN General Assembly's seabeds committee will make substantial progress at its August session. The USSR has made no response yet, but it is unlikely to change its opposition to having any international regime set up to govern peaceful uses of the seabeds.

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